

BOOK REVIEW

From Bob's bookshelf



DIRECT HIT:

aiming real leaders at the mission field

by Paul Borden

I READ IT BECAUSE: I was given this book by Dr. Howard Bixby. He has been a mentor of mine for many years. He is the former President of Baptist Bible Seminary in Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania. In 2008 we worked together with Christway Ministries, helping struggling churches. This book was recommended by Dr. Bixby to all consultants before we began working with the churches.

THE FEEL: This book has a motivational flair to it. It gives the reader the feeling that churches can be turned around with proper leadership and vision. Borden provides several examples of instances in which vision and direction led congregations to points of health and growth once again. Borden has a direct, no-nonsense delivery of the key principles for change.

SUBJECT MATTER: The book is a practical guide for pastors and church leaders. The author provides insights into developing a strategy for change. Borden lays out the principles to apply in casting vision and motivating the congregation. The tools in the appendix are useful for church leaders and lay people alike. This book is a good first read when approaching churches that are experiencing difficulty and decline.

QUOTABLE: "Missional leaders know intellectually as well as intuitively that followers are motivated when leaders proclaim a clear vision, which is the answer to a great urgency that the leader has also communicated." (p 39)

"Most dysfunctional congregations do not attract healthy leaders. However they often attract leaders who are unhealthy emotionally and spiritually." (p 60)

"Urgency and vision go together. Without urgency, people do not usually embrace vision; they prefer the status quo. Our job, therefore, is to make the status quo so unacceptable that people will desire hope, which means embracing the vision." (p 66)

CAVEATS/DANGERS: The danger is to believe that all it takes is applying the information in the book to turn around a church that is experiencing difficulty and decline. Not all problems are solved by proper leadership and vision. It is sometimes important to recognize that death has to occur to some movements, methodologies, organizations and churches. We often pour entirely too much energy into things that should be terminated with the hopes that it can turn around.

WHO SHOULD READ THIS BOOK? This book would be beneficial to any pastor who is leading a church that is in decline or has hit bottom. It is also a valuable resource to church consultants, denominational leaders, and practical theology professors.

RECOMMENDATION: Direct Hit is an easy read on leadership and vision for the church. The appendices contain valuable tools/resources regarding life cycles of the church and congregational self-studies. These resources can easily be carried into any meeting or boardroom and prove to be effective tools.

Reading a book like Direct Hit leaves little wiggle room for theorists and excuse-makers as to the reasons churches are in decline today.

